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UNCLAS HARARE 001779

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [KPAQ](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT FOOD CRISIS IN ZIM AND GMO FOOD;  
HARARE

1. Under headline "We'd rather starve: Importing of genetically modified food risky" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (08/05) carried the following op-ed by Isheunesu Magwaza:
2. "...Let me point out clearly that genetically modified (GMO) food has a long smoldering scientific controversy over risks and benefits. To date there has not been any detailed analysis of the risks associated with GMO foods. GMO imports are restricted in European countries and elsewhere because of environmental and health concerns. The importation of GMOs would render much maize grown in Zimbabwe unmarketable to other countries. It is a known fact that maize shipment from the U.S. is a mixture of conventional varieties and high tech kernels bearing bacterial genes to protect against insect pests. These bacterial genes are a threat to human health and environment.

"...If the U. S. has genuine need to alleviate our country's food shortage, it has to bring in milled GMO maize thus avoiding pollen drift. It is inconsiderate for the U. S. to refuse milling the GMO maize before its importation into Zimbabwe. The stance by the U. S. food agencies to refuse to cover the milling expenses raises more questions than answers. Milling expenses are estimated \$1,000 per metric ton which is not an expense at all for the giant nation, considering how much it costs to drop one bomb in Afghanistan. Fellow Zimbabweans remember when India balked a humanitarian shipment of genetically modified food, one U. S. official was quoted as saying 'beggars cannot be choosers.' Yes, beggars cannot be choosers, not of a doomed future! Fellow Zimbabweans we cannot loose our morals, dignity, resources and identity for a few GMO maize grains. It's good to be hungry with a free soul and clear conscience than to have a full stomach with contaminated and colonized soul and mind. The government was right in refusing GMO maize. Food for thought not death."

WHITEHEAD